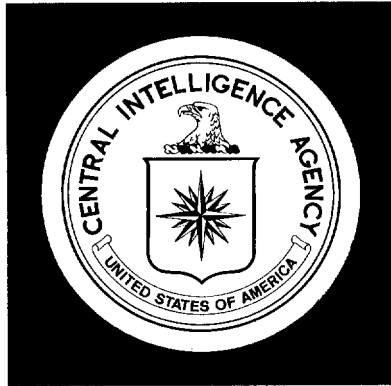


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JAPAN - SOUTH KOREA: TOKYO, UNDER HEAVY DOMESTIC PRESSURE, IS MAKING A RENEWED EFFORT TO BREAK THE MONTH-OLD STALEMATE WITH SEOUL OVER THE KIDNAPING OF SOUTH KOREAN OPPOSITION LEADER KIM TAE-CHUNG. JAPANESE OFFICIALS HAVE OUTLINED TO THE US EMBASSY A NEW APPROACH WHICH APPARENTLY SIDESTEPS, FOR THE TIME BEING, TOKYO'S EARLIER REQUEST THAT KIM BE RETURNED FORTHWITH TO AID THE JAPANESE INVESTIGATION. IN ORDER TO BREAK THE IMPASSE, TOKYO NOW PLANS TO REQUEST THAT SEOUL ACKNOWLEDGE THE COMPLICITY OF ROK OFFICIALS IN THE ABDUCTION, APOLOGIZE, AND PUNISH THE CULPRITS. THE JAPANESE HOPE KIM'S RELEASE COULD BE ARRANGED IN SUBSEQUENT NEGOTIATIONS.

THE KIM AFFAIR IS OF INCREASING CONCERN TO THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT. THE DIET, WHICH ENDS ON 28 SEPTEMBER, HAS NOT ENACTED ANY OF THE RULING CONSERVATIVES' "MUST" LEGISLATION BECAUSE THE OPPOSITION HAS BEEN EXPLOITING THE KIDNAPING. PRIME MINISTER TANAKA AND FOREIGN MINISTER OHIRA WANT THE MATTER RESOLVED BEFORE THEY LEAVE JAPAN FOR TRIPS TO EUROPE AND THE USSR LATE THIS MONTH.

THUS FAR, SEOUL HAS BEEN UNWILLING TO COOPERATE WITH THE JAPANESE, EXCEPT IN THE MOST MINOR WAYS, AND HAS REFUSED TO ACCEPT ANY SUGGESTION OF OFFICIAL INVOLVEMENT, PENDING COMPLETION OF ITS OWN INVESTIGATION. THE JAPANESE APPARENTLY HOPE THAT A SOFTER APPROACH WILL PROMPT SEOUL TO START TALKING SERIOUSLY. THEY WOULD USE THIS TO SHOW THEIR CRITICS THAT APPROACHES TO SEOUL ARE BEARING RESULTS. JAPANESE OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD THE US EMBASSY THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT PUBLIC AND OPPOSITION CRITICISM RESULTING FROM THE FAILURE TO GAIN KIM'S RELEASE CAN BE MANAGED AT THIS STAGE IF SEOUL WILL MEET TOKYO'S NEW TERMS.

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